



News Release

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Contact: Ken Foote, (808) 792-9535 or 282-9442
Deborah Ward, (808) 587-0320

SUPER SUCKER JUNIOR IS THE STATE'S LATEST TOOL IN THE BATTLE AGAINST ALIEN ALGAE

HONOLULU – The Super Sucker Junior, a smaller version of the original Super Sucker barge rigged with pumps to remove invasive algae from local waters, was unveiled today in Waikiki. A more versatile version of the original underwater “vacuum cleaner,” Junior is the state’s latest tool in the battle against alien algae on reefs in Hawai‘i.

Super Sucker Junior, which can be deployed at any boat ramp in the state, offers a smaller-size system with mobile capabilities that will allow removal of invasive algae in areas that the previous system could not access. It is the result of a collaborative effort led by the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources, and including the University of Hawai‘i, The Nature Conservancy, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Efforts to understand the biology, impacts, and control of invasive alien algae in Hawaii have been a continuous, collaborative effort among research scientists, resource managers, conservation groups and the community. It’s through this kind of cooperation that effective management strategies can be developed and implemented,” said Dr. Cynthia Hunter, assistant professor of marine biology for the University of Hawai‘i.

The 16-foot by 8-foot barge is propelled by a 25-horsepower engine and equipped with two four-horsepower pumps capable of siphoning 80 gallons of water per minute. The pumps are used to “suck” up invasive algae species, such as the particularly damaging gorilla ogo or *Gracilaria*

salicornia, that already dominate regions of Kane‘ohe Bay and O‘ahu’s south shore, and are also becoming abundant on the south shores of Maui and Moloka‘i. The destructive algae forms thick, tangled mats that smother and kill coral by blocking access to sunlight and pressing down on it with its weight.

The system is designed not to harm marine life that is inadvertently sucked into the system. This feature also produces fewer algae fragments, which helps to minimize the spread of algae.

Junior’s design, in particular, also helps trap loose fragments, which reduces the risk of spreading the algae during transport.

“The Super Sucker project demonstrates how targeted resources can directly help the management of invasive species. However, the future management of invasive species will require continued collaboration and dedication to combat the threat of invasive species to aquatic and terrestrial environments,” said Peter Young, DLNR chairperson.

The system requires a five-person crew to operate it, which includes two divers, two deck hands and one supervisor. Crew members include representatives from DLNR’s Division of Aquatic Resources, the University of Hawai‘i, and The Nature Conservancy.

Super Sucker Junior is part of a larger strategy to curb the spread of invasive algae in Hawaiian waters. Community-based volunteer clean ups have resulted in more than 100 tons of invasive algae removed by 2,000 volunteers through more than 20 events held since 2003. In addition, the use of algae-eating native sea urchins continues to be explored by researchers, as well as the enhancement of native plants to repopulate Hawai‘i’s coral reefs.

Funding for Super Sucker Junior has been provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hawai‘i Invasive Species Council, and the National Sea Grant Program through the support of Hawai‘i Senator Daniel K. Inouye.

The construction cost of Super Sucker Junior was approximately \$50,000, with an additional \$150,000 per year needed to operate and maintain the system.

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